

Nazarene Fellowship Circular Letter No 195

May 2002

In this Issue:

Page 1	Editorial	Sister Helen Brady
Page 2	A Jewish Marriage: Section I “A Love Story”	Zola Levitt
Page 5	Section II Scriptural Allusions	Brethren Richard and Paul Pursell
Page 8	Section III Some Implications	Brethren Richard and Paul Pursell
Page 9	Letter commenting on above	Brother Eric Cave
Page 10	The Wedding Garment	Brother Phil Parry
Page 13	The Third Heaven	Brother Edward Turney
Page 14	Response to two articles in “The Apocalyptic Messenger”	Brother Eric Cave
Page 16	Attack on “Opposing Sinful Flesh”	Richard Lister
Page 17	Response to above	Brother Russell Gregory

Editorial

Dear Brothers and Sisters and Friends, Loving Greetings

How odd the trains of thought are. I was thinking the other day of a Christadelphian relative of mine of whom I was fond. This relative had a parrot that he had called Blastus. So all because of Blastus the parrot I thought I would look up some facts about the original Blastus.

We learn about him from Luke in Acts. He was the royal chamberlain to Herod Agrippa 1. It was Blastus who arranged an audience for the people of Tyre and Sidon at Caesarea, to settle their differences with the king. Luke alone records the solution of the feud by the submission of the two cities to the chamberlain Blastus. For his master was the ruler of Galilee, upon which the food supply of the Phoenician coastal cities depended.

The story told by Luke is interesting because it is partly corroborated by Josephus Flavius. Josephus was a Jewish historian c38-c100 AD. He was born a decade after the death of Jesus, and he came to live in Rome about three years after Paul of Tarsus had been executed there. By then Christianity had spread through the empire, largely through the missionary journeys of Paul. There was no particular reason why Josephus should have paid special attention to these events, which were only later to become of world importance. A variety of religious sects and movements came and went at the time and they were outside his area of interest. He does however make a passing reference to the slaying of John the Baptist by Herod Antipas: and another to the trial and execution in AD.62 of James the brother of Jesus.

One disputed passage from Josephus purports to refer to Jesus and has been given great importance in Christian writings as corroborating the Gospels from a contemporary Jewish source. The passage refers to ‘a very able man, if man is the right word: for he was a worker of miracles, a teacher of those who were glad to hear the truth, and he won over many Jews and gentiles. This man was Christ; and when at the prompting of our leading men, Pilate had sentenced him to the cross, his original adherents remained faithful: for two days later they saw him alive again... and the group called Christians after him is not extinct even now.’ Some scholars say that this passage was not written by Josephus (at least not in its present form) but was inserted afterwards or revised later by someone else. The reliability of Josephus as a historian is subject to serious reservations. But whatever their bias or inadequacies, the works of Josephus are of enormous historical value. They are the major record, and often the only one, for a crucial and dramatic period of Judean history.

To return to the account by Luke concerning Herod Agrippa and his sudden and miserable end, and to which Josephus adds some interesting details; the king went to Caesarea... and gave a spectacle in honour of Caesar, at which all the chief personages were present. On the second day of the show, Herod put on a marvellously woven robe of silver, which shone wonderfully when the rays of the sun caught it. Thereupon his flatterers cried out, "Be propitious; if we revered thee hitherto as a man, from henceforth we acknowledge thee to be more than mortal." The king did not rebuke them, but as he looked up he saw an owl sitting on a rope and realized that the bird which had once been a messenger of good fortune to him was now an omen of evil. He was seized with violent internal pains, and told his friends that he, whom they saluted as a god, was about to depart from life. He lingered in agony for five days, and died, to the great grief of his countrymen in Caesarea.'

Blastus the chamberlain is not mentioned in Josephus's account, nor the feud with the coastal cities, but evidently the consequent overtures for peace and the following reconciliation are typical of events settled on festive occasions as a result of royal magnanimity.

Once again at the time of writing, we see tremendous stirrings in the Middle East regretfully involving much death, suffering and grief, but as Jeremiah 33 vv 6 to 16 says "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will perform that good thing which I have promised unto the house of Israel and to the house of Juda."

Love to all, Helen Brady

The following three sections have been copied from the "Shofar" magazine, Volume 1, Issue 3:

A Jewish Marriage

A procedure that "Opens the Scriptures"

Few have difficulty recognizing the current relationship between Christ and his bride, yet many may not be aware that the scenario is based upon Hebrew marital procedures. This article is intended to inform readers of some Hebrew marriage customs, many which originate in Genesis, to help us become more aware of the allusions in the Scriptures to these practices which we might otherwise miss. There are three sections. Please read them in sequence. The first section is from a booklet "A Christian Love Story" by Zola Levitt, a Messianic Jew. We have edited or adapted some parts for inclusion herein - Richard and Paul Pursell (editors of "Shofar" Magazine).

SECTION 1

A Love Story

by Zola Levitt

Our Lord was Jewish and he did things like a Jew. So often, if we consult the Jewish law and custom, we find many of the motivations for particular actions of our Lord. Here, we will consider the Jewish custom of matrimony. Obviously, wedding customs varied from nation to nation and from time to time. Even in today's world we see different traditions of marriage taking place at the same time in different countries. The Jews had their own peculiar ways, based on the Old Covenant, and the Lord, as we shall see, followed those traditions in choosing a bride.

A Legal Contract

We should appreciate that the Jews had no dating or courtship as we now think of those things. Marriage to them was a practical legal matter, established by contract and carried through by exacting

procedure. These customs still exist in a form today in the Jewish wedding ceremony, but in Jesus' time they were most fascinating and complex.

When the young man of Israel in Jesus' time saw the girl he wanted (or the girl his father said he wanted), he would approach her with a marriage contract. He would come to her house with a covenant (a true legal agreement) giving the terms by which he would propose marriage. The most important consideration in the contract was the price the bridegroom would be willing to pay to marry this particular bride.

The bridegroom would present himself to the bride with this agreement, offering to pay a suitable price for her, and she and her father would consider his contract. If the terms were suitable, the bride and groom would drink a cup of wine together and this would seal the bargain. This cup was most significant. It signified the bridegroom's willingness to sacrifice to have this bride. It was offered as a toast to the bride, and of course, it showed the bride's willingness to enter into this marriage.

Then the groom would pay the price. It should be said that this price was no modest token but was set so that the knew bride would be a costly item - that was the idea. The young man had no delusions that he was getting something for nothing. He would pay dearly to marry the girl of his choice.

I Go To Prepare a Place

When that matter was settled the groom would depart. He would make a little speech to his bride, saying, "I go to prepare a place for you" and he would return to his father's house. Back at his father's house, he would build her a bridal chamber, a little mansion, in which they would have their future honeymoon.

We should appreciate that this was a complex undertaking for the groom. He would actually build a separate building on his father's property, or decorate a room in his father's house. The bridal chamber had to be beautiful - one doesn't honeymoon just anywhere; and it had to be stocked with provisions since the bride and groom were going to remain inside for several days (seven). This construction project would take the better part of a year, ordinarily, and the father of the groom would be the judge of when it was finished. (We can see the logic there - obviously, if it were up to the young man, he would throw up some kind of modest structure and go get the girl!). But the father of the groom, who had been through this previously and was less excited, would be the final judge on when the chamber was ready and when the young man would go to claim his bride.

Watch and Be Ready

The bride on her part, was obliged to do a lot of waiting. She would take the time to gather her trousseau (wedding garment) and be ready when her bridegroom came. Custom provided that she had to have an oil lamp ready in case he came late at night in the darkness, because she had to be ready to travel at a moment's notice. During this long period of waiting, she was referred to as "consecrated," "set apart," "bought with a price." She was to wear her veil whenever she stepped out of her house so that other young men would realize that she was spoken for, and that they should not approach her with another contract. She was truly a lady-in-waiting, but there was no doubt her groom would return. Sometimes a young man would depart for a very long time indeed, but of course, he had paid a high price for his bride; even though there were other young women available, he would surely return to the one with whom he had made a covenant.

As the year went on, the bride would assemble her sisters and bridesmaids and whoever would go with her to the wedding when the bridegroom came, and they would each have their oil lamps ready. They would wait at her house every night on the chance that the groom would come, along with his groomsmen, and sweep them all away to a joyous and sudden wedding ceremony.

Meanwhile, the bridegroom would be building and decorating with all that he had. His father would inspect the chamber from time to time to see if it was ready. If he came along the road at this point and saw the young man working on his bridal chamber, we might well ask, "When's the big day?" But the bridegroom would answer, "Only my father knows."

The Bridegroom Cometh

Finally, the chamber would be ready, and the bridegroom would assemble his young friends to accompany him on the exciting trip to claim his bride. The big moment had arrived and the bridegroom was more than ready, we can be sure. He and his young men would set out in the night, making every attempt to completely surprise the bride. Over at the bride's house, things had better be ready! To be sure, the bride would be surprised since the groom would try to come at midnight while she was sleeping. But the oil lamps were ready, and even though she might be sleeping in her wedding dress, she would definitely be surprised. It's a wonder she would sleep at all as time went on!

Now there were rules to be observed in consideration of a woman's feelings. The groom couldn't just rush in on her. After all, her hair might be in rollers! As the excited party of young men would get close to her house, they were obliged to give her a warning. Someone in the wedding party would shout, "The bridegroom comes!" Her sisters and bridesmaids who wanted to attend also had to have their lamps trimmed and ready, of course. No one would try to walk through ancient Israel, with its rocky terrain, in the dark of night without carrying a lamp.

And so the groom and his men would charge in, grab the girls and make off with them! The father of the bride and her brothers would look the other way - perhaps just making one quick check to see that this was the young man with the contract - and the wedding party would be off. People in the village might be awakened from their sleep by the happy voices of the young people carrying the oil lamps through the streets, and that's how they knew a wedding was going on.

The Wedding Feast

When the wedding party reached the house of the groom's father, the bride and groom would go into their chamber and shut the door. No one else would enter. The groom's father, meanwhile, would have assembled the wedding guests - his friends - and they would be ready to celebrate the new marriage. Since the wedding was actually going to take seven days (until the appearance of the bride and groom out of the chamber), it was hard to plan for. Occasionally, the host would run out of wine as we can well imagine. The Lord himself graced a wedding at Cana with his presence and replenished the wine for the celebrants as told in John 2.

But the celebrating would not start right away. First, the bride had to be acceptable (chaste) and the marriage had to actually be consummated. The Jews were a most law-abiding people and the law provided that the bride and groom become one before their marriage was recognized. Thus, the friend of the bridegroom - the individual we might refer to as "the best man" - would stand near the door of the bridal chamber, waiting to hear the bridegroom's voice. When the marriage was consummated, the bridegroom would tell his friend through the door and the friend would then go to the wedding guests and announce the good news. The celebration would then begin and it would continue for an entire week!

At the end of the week, the bride and groom would make their long awaited appearance to the cheers of the crowd. There would then be a joyous meal - a marriage supper, which we might refer to as the wedding reception - to honour the new couple. At this point, the bride would have discarded her veil, since she was now a married woman, and all would see exactly who it was the bridegroom had chosen. The new couple and the guests would enjoy a magnificent feast to conclude the entire matrimonial week.

After the marriage supper, the bride and groom would depart, not remaining any longer at the home of the groom's father. They would go instead to their own house, which had been prepared by the bridegroom. As the bride and groom would travel back through the village, it would be appreciated by all onlookers just who the couple was and where their permanent home would be.

And that was a complete Jewish wedding in Jesus' time, in all its glory. Readers of the gospel can easily see the beautiful analogies between this complex procedure and the manner in which the Lord himself called out his chosen bride.

SECTION II

A Jewish Marriage : Scriptural Allusions

In this section we have expanded some of Zola Levitt's work from section one to explore some of the apparent scriptural allusions to the Jewish marriage procedure. Readers may hereby appreciate how a Hebrew perspective opens the Scriptures and directly enhances our understanding of God's Word. Notice, also, as you read, that this subject touches on issues such as the atonement, the memorial meal, judgment, prophecy, and of course, the Everlasting Covenant.

R. and P. Pursell.

* * *

The ecclesia is called "the Bride of Christ" in the New Testament for a good reason. Abraham, through his servant, contracted with Rebecca's family with "precious things," and Jacob contracted for his bride with seven years of labour. Like Hebrew fathers of old, it was Messiah's Father who chose a bride for His Son. "No man can come unto me except the Father draw him." It is his bride who drinks the cup with him and his bride for whom the price was paid. He said, "I go to prepare a place for you," to those who now await his sudden yet expected return. The Lord made His covenant with "the house of Israel." for "salvation is of the Jews," and it continues to all those who are by faith the seed of Abraham and seek their Jewish Messiah.

And so, Jesus came to his own, the people of Israel, prepared to pay that price. He came with the New Covenant, to sign it with his blood, as it were, to make the covenant sure. We see him drinking the cup with his bride in Matthew 26:27-29. He took his last opportunity to drink the cup with his bride and seal the New Covenant before he paid the price the next day.

"And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it, for this is my blood of the New Covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."

Jesus praised his Father for bringing forth his bride and he gave a toast to her. Then he told all the believers to drink this cup so that they would answer his proposal affirmatively and become his promised bride.

Having "put on Christ" in baptism, we bear the name of our husband having received a veil (covering. Hebrew, "Wrap over") during this contractual period and are reminded weekly of our common destiny by remembering the price our husband paid. Rabbi Morris N. Kertzer writes:

"The sharing of a single cup of wine by the bride and groom is a reminder of their common destiny, for henceforth their lives will be inseparable. The first cup, at the opening of the marriage rites, represented the betrothal, and the second the actual marriage. (What is a Jew? Collier Books).

And we recall Jesus words:

"But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's Kingdom." (Matthew 26:29).

The Price Paid

How much did our Groom pay? We all realize that our Lord died for us and that this was painful, humiliating and insulting to the Son of God. "Ye are bought with a price" (1 Corinthians 6:20).

But do we fully appreciate how much his bride cost him?

"Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice... Husbands love your wives, even as Christ also loved the ecclesia, and gave himself for it... that he might present it to himself a glorious ecclesia, not having spot... but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the

ecclesia: for we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.” (Ephesians 5:2.25-30).

Anytime the Jewish bride felt tempted to break her contract, it is certain that a mere reading through the terms would remind her that her bridegroom had paid a great deal and was trusting her to keep her side of the bargain. If we read our contract often and understand it completely, we can more likely glorify our bridegroom as we wait for him.

“I (Paul) am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ” (2 Corinthians 22:1,2).

Departure and Waiting

We see in the Jewish wedding custom that the bridegroom would depart to his father’s house after he made the covenant, drank the cup, and paid the price. Likewise our Lord went on to his Father’s house, departing in words similar to what many Jewish bridegrooms must have spoken before leaving their betrothed brides.

“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions... I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also” (John 14:1-4).

Jesus is with his Father now, mediating on our behalf and preparing our place in his Father’s household. We continue in the waiting period. True we grow impatient for his return, but then imagine how impatient that young bride must have been! People who plan to be married don’t like waiting around, especially if they can’t even see each other! Undoubtedly, there were a few contract violations during the waiting period, and people indeed thought there was a violation in the case of Joseph and Mary, for the Pharisees implied Jesus had been “born of fornication.” (John 8:1). Joseph and Mary were “espoused,” that is, betrothed, contracted, but not married in the consummated sense, when Mary became with child. Joseph originally thought Mary had violated their marriage contract in a most grave manner, and he sought to “put her away.” or nullify the contract. Of course the angel revealed the true nature of her pregnancy and Joseph and Mary later went on to complete the second phase of a Jewish marriage, the consummation.

In our case we have been waiting a long time. But we must continue to wait in a manner that would gratify our bridegroom. The veil, as in Rebecca’s case (Genesis 24:65), is worn by the bride and is her covering while in the contractual phase. Our consecrated, set-apart ways speak to the unbelievers around of our loyalty to God and our agreement to marry His son. Paul put it very strongly when he said,

“Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit” (1 Corinthians 6:19,20).

The Groom’s Wait

Not only is the bride anxious for her betrothed, “I sought him whom my soul loveth; I sought him but I found him not,” but the groom also longs for his bride. “Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse.” (Song 4). These words may remind us that Abraham’s bride was indeed also his (half) sister (Genesis 12:13). The longing of the bride and groom while apart and their anticipation to be united in marriage is nearly unbearable.

Where is His Coming?

We must fully realize, as we wait, that our Lord is coming. The bridegroom always returns. He is “called faithful and true.” (Revelation 19:11). We hear many discussions about the Lord’s return but we often falter while we wait. We may sometimes reason that if he didn’t come last year or last week that he may not come tonight and we might question “Where is the promise of his coming?” (2 Peter 3:4). But there will be a “night” when the Lord will come and he requires that we be ready and waiting. We can

believe that those Jewish brides waited at home every night and trusting constantly in that marvellous night when they would at last hear the shout. The return of the Lord for his bride is most clear in the Scriptures.

“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel...” (1 Thessalonians 4:16).

But just as the bride and groom are to wait for the decision from the father of the bridegroom, Jesus said,

“But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only... Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.” (Matthew 24:36,42).

Watch and be Ready

Now when the Lord comes for us, we are to have oil lamps ready and waiting, being ready to travel even in the dark of night. The parable of the ten virgins (Matthew 25:1-13) is correctly applied to the Kingdom that has marvellous application to this wedding story. In that parable, there were ten virgins “which took their lamps and went forth to meet the bridegroom.” The bridegroom in this parable acted in accordance with the Jewish tradition of totally surprising the bride and catching her asleep, “while the bridegroom tarried they all slumbered and slept (v.5). But then he comes with a shout. “And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him!” (v.6). we see by the ensuing verses that only those virgins with their lamps trimmed with oil were able to go with the bridegroom. The others, suddenly realizing that they were not properly prepared, went out to purchase oil, but they were too late.

“Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.” (Matthew 25:11-13).

Redemption

When our Lord returns to make his covenant a reality, he will redeem his bride according to the terms of the contract.

“There shall come out of Zion the Redeemer.-- for this is my covenant unto them... (Romans 11:26:27 - cited from Isaiah 59:20). “...the year of my redeemed is come (Isaiah 63:4). “...then look up, and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh (Luke 21:28).

Judgment

Subject to our bridegroom’s approval at the judgment, we earnestly expect to be joined with him.

“Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.” (Matthew 19:6).

The “Friend”

When the “messenger” (Malachi 3:1) comes again in the “spirit of and power of Elijah,” as did John the Baptist to “prepare the way of the Lord” we might hear similar words of Jesus “best man” the “friend of the bridegroom” announcing

“I am not the Messiah, but that I am sent before him. He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled.” (John 3:28,29).

The Wedding Feast

Only a little space is given in the Bible to the magnificent culminating event of the marriage supper of the Lamb:

“Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. (Revelation 19:7-9).

The bride shall then be arrayed in “fine linen, clean and white,” which is “the righteousness of the chosen ones.” We are reminded of the words of the prophet Isaiah,

“Let my soul rejoice in the Lord, for he has clothed me with the robe of salvation, and the garment of joy: he has put a mitre on me as on a bridegroom, and adorned me with ornaments as a bride.” (Isaiah 61:10, from the LXX).

Indeed at this time the bride shall be perfect, she shall be as perfect as Jesus Christ. “We shall be like him.” We rejoice now, being the bride of Christ in the contractual phase of a Jewish marriage, but imagine the joy we will have at the consummation when we become one “glorious body” with him in the Kingdom to come!

Conclusion

So, the marriage is complete, having fulfilled the sequence of events: a chosen bride, a contract, a cup, a price paid, the groom’s departure, the bride waiting, anxiety for his return, his appearance, judgment, a second cup, and finally unity. Then shall the “new covenant” be realized with the “bride.” She shall be called “sought out,” not “forsaken.” (Isaiah 62:12).

“After those days, I will put my law in their inward parts and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people” (Jeremiah 31:33) - the exact words addressed to the “new Jerusalem,” the “bride adorned for her husband.” (Revelation 21:2).

It is fitting that the bride of Christ, now including many former Gentiles, should appreciate the customs and traditions that teach us so much about our Lord. The magnificent types in the Old Covenant under which so many millions laboured for God for so many centuries, are essential to our faith.

SECTION III

A Jewish Marriage : Some Implications

This section is intended to stimulate thought and discussion, since this subject touches on so many issues. Also, see diagram below.

The previous sections are not without some far-reaching implications. Important issues are related throughout. The following questions are intended to bring attention to some of these issues.

1. Faithful men of old, such as Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, married “in the family” as the Law later required. As was Sarah, so also the bride of Christ is his (half) sister, (being of his “father’s house”). What implications do these facts have on eligibility of brides for brethren in Christ?
2. Did Christ die for all mankind or for only a select group?

3. John 14:1-4, a passage incorporating the phrases “I go to prepare a place for you” and “in my Father’s house are many mansions” is often used to support a heaven-going concept. Do the Jewish wedding customs offer another interpretation? Compare to Jesus’ final words to the faithful, “inherit the kingdom prepared for you...” (Matthew 25:34).
4. Readers will note the Jewish marriage is a two-part process, first a covenant and later physical unity. What implications does this have on erring or wayward brethren? Once a man is “in Christ” can he by his own volition remove himself from the legally binding relationship? Who must judge and who may “put away” for unfaithfulness? Does the bride share this same prerogative?
5. Rejection or “putting away” of an unfaithful or “tainted” bride could only be done during the betrothal period. What implications does this fact have upon marriages of long standing? To what point in the marriage procedure then would Jesus’ words, “except it be for fornication” relate (Matthew 19:9, Deuteronomy 24:1).
6. There is but one everlasting covenant and one bride, which the groom redeems. What impact does this fact have on the long held concept of two judgments separated by one thousand years?
7. Upon the return of the groom, the covenanted only are to be in the chamber. What implications does this have on who will appear at “judgment.”

* * * * *

Relating to the foregoing articles, I have received the following letter from Eric Cave:-

Dear Russell,

The apostle Paul told the Romans that he was indebted to the Greeks and the Barbarians for the fruits of the gospel that he preached. I think we are debtors both to the Messianic Jews and the editors of Shofar magazine for the remarkable and fascinating love story in Volume 1 issue 3, by Zola Levitt, a Messianic Jewess, on the subject of “Marriage in the time of Jesus” which so powerfully confirms Nazarene Teaching.

My only quibble lies with the editorial in Section 2 by Brethren Richard and Paul Pursell where they say that the subject touches on the issues of the atonement, the memorial feast, judgment, prophecy, and of course the everlasting covenant.

Neither the parable of the wise and foolish virgins, or the Jewish traditions in the time of our Lord touch on the subject of judgment at the time that the Lord comes to claim his bride. The scripture is quite clear in 1 Corinthians 15:52, 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17, and Revelation 20:5,6, that the bride, clothed in her wedding garment of immortality meets her groom without any of the Christadelphian nonsense of an intervening judgment assize before she is declared fit for her groom.

YHWH knoweth those who are His, as Moses declared to Koran and company, Numbers 16:5; Paul to Timothy, 2 Timothy 2:19, and whilst it is true that 2 Timothy 4:1 reads “I charge thee therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom” it is equally true that the word “judge” (Greek *krino*) literally means “to distinguish either mentally or judicially” and is variously rendered in scripture by implication as, determine, try, condemn, conclude, avenge, esteem, to sue at law, etc., it is therefore quite unwarranted to use this verse as any sort of proof that Jesus will set up an assize for the purpose of passing judgment before sentencing the applicant to either eternal life or rejection from his Kingdom, particularly in view of Revelation 20 where verse 6 asserts that “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection, on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.” Immortal emergence in the glory of the true wedding garment is the reward of the bride at the coming of her Lord.

With love to all in Jesus Christ our Lord,

Eric Cave.

While perusing through some old Circular Letters I came across the following article written by P. Parry in 1955 and felt it worthy of another ‘airing’ as it relates to Jewish Marriage:

The Wedding Garment

Our subject title is taken from the parable which Jesus undoubtedly addressed to the self-righteous Jews of His day, namely, the marriage of the King’s Son.

The parable deals primarily with the Jews and their history as a nation, from the calling of Abraham to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. But it also includes the bringing in of the Gentiles and the final judgment and “Second Death.”

The parable of the Vineyard is very similar. Both speak of Israel as the Vine of God’s planting and the priesthood as the husbandmen working in the vineyard. But they proved themselves corrupt and inefficient time after time, and God sent unto them His servants the prophets, rising early and sending them, but they would not hearken. They made light of it.

The invitation was “Come to the marriage feast.” There was no excuse for them who were invited, they received the invitation and instructions from the King’s servants as to the procedure.

It was a custom at this time for all guests invited to a marriage feast to wear a special garment for the occasion. In the case we are considering it is highly probable that the king supplied the garments for the guests and no one was eligible unless wearing this garment.

Now, we must not look for fulfilment of every minute detail of a parable, but for the lessons it is meant to convey. So we will endeavour to consider the lessons in the order given.

Firstly, we have Jesus asserting the supremacy of God the King, His mercy and kindness, love and goodness in inviting certain ones to share in the rejoicing at the marriage of His Son, who is the heir. The garment they were to wear was a special one and could only be obtained from the King. There was no alternative. The instructions for obtaining it were given by the King’s servants, the Holy Apostles and Prophets.

Consequently, those who made light of the invitation and went their several ways, following their own temporal and corrupt desires, in effect spurned the garment offered to them, were considered unworthy and spiritually naked.

Let us now consider what this garment is and how it is obtained.

The only information is in the book supplied by the King, which is His Word of Truth, the Bible. We are informed that Adam, by transgression, sold himself and all in his loins to sin and so “Sin” has come to be known or personified as a lord, or master. When Adam and Eve sinned, the shame of their nakedness (sin) appeared. They realized their position that they were under sentence to die an inflicted death (not the death natural to their physical constitution) and no matter what they said in excuse for failure, in effect, they stood like the man without the wedding garment, naked before God, and speechless.

But we see that mercy commenced in Eden; God did not carry out the sentence on Adam and Eve. A substitute was found. God foresaw that His son could be the substitute for Adam and all in him. Therefore He typified that death in Eden by slaying a lamb and providing from it coats of skin to “cover” the nakedness (sin) of Adam and Eve.

But suppose they had rejected this covering, what would have been the result? The answer is simple; the death sentence would have been carried out. But Adam and Eve were not so foolish as to reject the mercy of God in His provision of the covering.

Thus they exhibited faith in that which typified the Lamb of God “which taketh away the sin of the world” and put on the garment provided by God for the wedding of His Son.

What then is the position of the class represented by the man in the parable who had not a wedding garment? This class comprises those who reject the sacrifice of God's Son as a substitute for Adam and all in him by enlightenment. All were sold under sin by Adam's transgression.

Thus, when this is made known, "light" is come and the enlightened realize they are in Adam and if they do not take advantage of God's provision in Christ, are classified as rejecters of the wedding garment and are amenable to the second death through their own foolishness.

The sin of Adam made no difference to his physical constitution; the difference it made was his relationship to God and his legal status. Although corruptible before transgression he was not under sentence of death, but as soon as he transgressed he came under the sentence for that sin, which was death.

God did not say to Adam, "in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt die a gradual process of decay lasting approximately 930 years." In fact, I am convinced that Adam and Eve lived a perfectly happy and healthy life until that life ceased through the natural and normal constitution of their physical make-up. Adam knew exactly what the sentence of death meant; he knew that it meant a corruptible cessation of life, although physically he had not experienced such a thing.

Were Adam and Eve living in fear of death by natural decay every day of their natural existence? I think not. Can anyone truly say that they are living in fear of natural death every hour of their existence? Certainly not. But what of a murderer under sentence of inflicted death? What are the feelings in this case? I would say, very much the same as were those of Adam and Eve when they realized what they had incurred by transgression. They hid themselves because they were ashamed of their transgression (sin) and afraid of what they had incurred, the fear of death was in them.

Imagine then, their feelings of relief when God in His mercy provided a substitute.

In the light of these things can we not therefore understand more fully the words of Jesus in Revelation 3:18 - "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich: and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear."?

There were in the church of Sardis a few who had not defiled their garments and Jesus said of them, "they shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy." "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life but I will confess his name before my Father and before His angels."

The inference therefore is that many have and will defile their garments. To defile a garment is to render it unrecognizable. Therefore to defile the garment provided by the King for the wedding is the equivalent of not wearing one, as it would be unrecognizable as such. The warning of Jesus therefore, in Revelation 16:15 is "behold I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame."

[I have often wondered of whether this is a clue to the time Jesus comes, for we are reminded that these who are the true brethren and sisters of Christ are not in darkness that that day should overtake them as a thief. It seems peculiar for this declaration of Jesus to be made in the middle of a description of the future gathering of the nations to the battle of the great day of God Almighty, if it be without significance.]

"Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments." Obviously one cannot keep his garment undefiled unless he has first received it. When therefore a believer has been duly baptized into the "sacrificial death of Christ" he is freely presented by God with the only available covering for sin. Those who spurn this free unmerited gift have no place at the wedding (Matthew 22:11). All therefore requested of us now, is that, after redemption at baptism and induction into Christ, we keep this garment "clean" till the wedding day, so shall we walk with Him "in white."

How then can anyone dare to say that a genuinely baptized person is still "in Adam"? To state such a thing is to directly oppose the inspired Apostle Paul in writing to the Corinthians (2 Corinthians 5:14-21). C.C.Walker, a Christadelphian has done just this. This is the man whom one member of this body described

as a “spiritual giant.” Yet this “spiritual giant” has condemned to oblivion every Christadelphian of like faith as he by the statement he made in the “Christadelphian” magazine, November 1922, page 501, as follows;

“As to being “in Adam” it is a fallacy to suppose that the baptized are not, “in Adam” or that all “in Adam” are “the wicked.” It is not so. All who die are “in Adam.” Christ and Judas alike in the days of the flesh were “in Adam.”

We must conclude from this that those who were baptized in Christ’s day and those who have been baptized since, were all baptized into Adam seeing that Christ was “in Adam.”

O ye Christadelphians! What shall we do with verse 13 of Revelation chapter 14? “And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die IN THE LORD (not “in Adam”) from henceforth. Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours and their works do follow them.” Did the Apostle say “If any man be in Adam he is a new creature”? Definitely not. Paul knew the difference but apparently C.C.Walker did not. He died by his own testimony “in Adam” unredeemed, unrelated to Jesus Christ, without a wedding garment.

How such a body of professed believers of the Scriptures can deny such statements as found in Galatians 2:20; 3:26-28; 4:31; Colossians 3:3,4,9,10; Luke 3:22, beats me. Yet they do just this by making so many indiscriminate statements such as C.C.Walker.

We do not doubt the sincerity of many but there are also those who are self-conceited and puffed up in their own supposed knowledge, and there are the willingly ignorant and the spoon-fed who do not bother to search or think for themselves. Yet they are all ready to pounce on the clergy and the people indoctrinated with their superstitions and false theories; but when faced with people who, by the mercy of God, have become more skilled in the word than themselves, they frantically clutch at certain passages of Scripture like drowning men clutching at straws and like the Egyptians, are fully engulfed in that which was the salvation of Israel at that time and which is the salvation of spiritual Israel now.

The wedding garment is obtained only through the merits of Christ’s death, He being in the unique position of Son of God, deriving life direct from God, as did Adam in the beginning.

Jesus was not a son of Adam although made of the flesh relative to Adam, made of the seed of David (Mary), according to flesh (not life). All life in Adam has been forfeited by Adam’s transgression. Now, if Jesus was included in this Adamic condemnation and forfeiture, He would not have been in a position to redeem and save His ‘brother.’ The life that was to redeem and save could not be derived from the forfeited Adamic source but must and could be derived from God alone. It was the life of the flesh, in the blood, that was given and required to effect the Ransom, not Christ’s righteousness, or faith and obedience under trial. These latter were essential for His own continued right to life and for His resurrection to life eternal, or deliverance from the death state after having given up His life in the blood on behalf of the people.

If Christ was under condemnation in any way God could not have said “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” And no one can doubt that God was referring to a living soul. Jesus did not and could not sacrifice His character for any one: that character is still His by which He is able to make intercession in the behalf of His brethren, having been tempted in all points as they, yet without sin.

Neither can anyone claim they have been baptized into a risen Christ, for it is the death of Christ that we are baptized into, crucified in symbol with Him that the body belonging to sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin but by the life which we now live by the power of the Son of God we might serve Him.

Reader! Hast thou the Wedding Garment”? Then do not defile it. So shall we walk with Him in white. “He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father and before His angels.”

Brother Phil Parry

The Third Heaven

In 2 Corinthians 12 the apostle Paul mentions certain “visions and revelations of the Lord,” which he had “about fourteen years” before the time of writing that epistle, or, according to the date given in the margin, A.D.46. The apostle only alludes to those visions and revelations; he does not describe what he saw and heard; indeed he tells us that the words he heard in the third heaven were unspeakable; “not lawful for a man to utter.” The elevation of the apostle to this height of observation and knowledge impressed him with a deep sense of glory; though he would not glory of himself as a man.

This scene of power, located in the third heaven, doubtless acted on the mind of this chosen witness as helm and compass act on the movement of a ship, directing it with certainty over the dark and often perilous waters to a haven of rest and pleasure. And it should seem that some such beacon and impulse were needful to the achievement of a career arduous as his. The scene of the Damascus road would have a similar influence, like the night of Israel’s departure from Egypt, it was a thing much to be remembered never to be forgotten.

We cannot peruse these few lines in the twelfth of Corinthians but with a strong desire to learn more of the apostle’s experience. We would enter with him into that sealed paradise and hear the words unspeakable. It is impossible to repress this curiosity and although we are excluded, we linger at the gate, greatly wondering; the more so as the privileged visitant returned filled with awe and delight, his lips closed save for the announcement of his own admission and blissful astonishment; he is not conscious whether it were in mind only, or in body that he was conveyed into the third heaven. So scanty is the information as to be almost worse than none to our eager feelings.

Forbidden to know what Paul saw and heard within the sacred precincts of the third heaven, are we prohibited the enquiry as to what the third heaven really was? We think not. Jewish tradition describes seven heavens. It would, not profit the reader to transcribe all the Rabbi’s say concerning these imaginary spheres. Let it suffice to state that the third heaven signified, according to them, the clouds or ‘aether’ and the seventh, the domain where are “the souls of the righteous; the souls and spirits which are reserved for the bodies yet to be formed, and the dew by which God is to vivify the dead,”

Were this rabbinical speculation and arrangement of any value it would constitute an argument opposed to orthodox Christianity touching the place visited by Paul, since it is generally supposed that the apostle was favoured with a sight of heaven, whereas he was not exalted enough by four stages, being only in the third heaven, or the region of the clouds instead of the seventh, or habitation of the souls and spirits. But our respect for much of Jewish traditions is no stronger than it is for a great deal of modern theology. Regarding the third heaven as the vicinity of the clouds that float above our heads veiling the fathomless azure beyond, what could the apostle see or hear there? Balloons have ascended much higher.

In relation to the apostle’s experience we gain no knowledge whatever by this literal atmospheric interpretation of the third heaven. The question then arises, are we at a stand, is there no other channel in which our enquiries may venture? There is. The employment of figures in the prophetic writings abundantly includes the heavens, and the application of them with all their bright and terrible garniture to the political and religious constitution of the Kingdom of Israel. These were the Almighty’s heaven and earth, studied with golden stars, illumined by sun and moon, curtained by thick clouds, watered by fountains and great rivers, clothed with grass, decked with flowers, shaded with woods and forests, and encircled by the sea. Scarce an object in all our range of vision but what is employed to picture the divinely created and organized confraternity of Israel’s sons. So numerous are the instances of this use of metaphors that, for the readers whom we address, it is not requisite to adduce quotations.

Here then is a leading fact, a strong point of departure, that is to say, the Kingdom of the Lord is known as a system of heavens and earth. The dissolution of these was often threatened by the ancient seers; the heavens were to become black, to be rolled up like a scroll, to pass away, and after a long interval of darkness and desolation the sun was again to rise, the stars were to be seen in the firmament, the silver moon was to symbolize settled peace, the dessert to be watered and richly clad, the forests to clap their hands, the sea to roar and the fullness thereof. In a word, the prophets behold afar off a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.

We shall not trace the chequered track of history leading to Zion's obscuration and overthrow. The Mosaic heaven had, in Paul's day waxed old and was ready to vanish away. Since then chaos reigns. But the brooding spirit at length moves o'er the long dark silence and the first faint signs of regeneration indicate that the time approaches for the planting of the new heavens and the new earth.

The limit assigned for this second heaven and earth is a thousand years, the best period of the world's mortal life; the sabbatic rest after the hard-working week; but still only the herald of the eternal climax, or third heaven, when God shall be all in all.

The apostle could not be interdicted from disclosing his visions and revelations if they appertained to the first heaven, for in his own time the kingdom had become matter of history. The state of things in the second heaven could not, for a similar reason, be hidden, because it is the burden of all the prophets.

But the third heaven, no particulars are vouchsafed further than that Christ shall deliver up the kingdom to His Father, that "there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away."

The conclusion then is that the third heaven into which the apostle, while in trance was snatched away, is that third and final manifestation of God's government among men, when the inhabitants of our world shall enter upon an unending paradise of rest, of wisdom, of fellowship with the Elohim, painless and blissful.

Edward Turney.

We have received a copy of two articles from volume 4, No 2, February 2002, of "The Apocalyptic Messenger", edited by T.R.Lister, the author and editor of the first one, and another written by Chris Maddocks, whose reasoning we have had occasion to criticise before:

Mr Lister begins his editorial with the following paragraph :-

"CLEAN FLESH HERESY. This magazine ("The Apocalyptic Messenger") has always defended the expositions of Bro Thomas as the resurrected apostolic faith of the last days fulfilling Rev. 11:11, "the spirit of life entering into the witnesses," that is the revival of the apostolic faith necessitated after the death of the witnesses (Rev 11:7). Apostasy therefore is any departure from this teaching as set forth in Elpis Israel and Eureka as a falling away from the original pioneer position. So when we received through the post an article from the Nazarene Fellowship by F.J.Pearce entitled "For What the Law Could Not Do" which propagates views on the Atonement, nature of Christ, nature of man, the fall of man (Adam), diametrically opposed to Bro Thomas's expositions we take issue. Bro Pearce and the Nazarene Fellowship must know that they stand in opposition to Bro Thomas, as did Edward Turney in 1871 and J.J.Andrew in 1894, both were resisted by Robert Roberts in defence of the original faith resurrected by Bro Thomas. So likewise we repudiate the false and specious doctrines of the Nazarenes as clean flesh heresy or the doctrine of Antichrist (2 Peter 2:1, 1 John 4:1-3, 2 John 7:11)... The argument subtended by these apostates is..."

and then follows the usual misrepresentation of Nazarene Fellowship teachings.

We are constrained to demand from T.R.Lister which of the contradictory and confused articles of John Thomas and Robert Roberts on the subject of the Atonement we are expected to believe?

1. Are we to believe that as a result of Adam's disobedience "the divine sentence upon him defiled and became a physical law of his being" as Robert Roberts asserts in his Statement of Faith (Clause 5),

OR

are we to believe that “the change in Adam was moral and not physical” as John Thomas asserted in the “Herald of the Kingdom, page 159?

2. Are we to believe on the subject of “Sin and its Effects” that besides the obvious scriptural definition of “transgression of the Law” it also according to “Elpis Israel,” page 126, “represents that physical principle in the animal nature which is the cause of all disease, death, and resolution into dust. It is that in the flesh which has the power of death, and it is called “sin” because the development, or fixation of this evil in the flesh was the result of transgression,” and later, “Fixation of all this evil in the flesh was the result of transgression” and “The remote cause of these motions is that the physical principle or quality of the flesh, styled indwelling sin, which returns the mortal body to dust” - “Elpis Israel,” pp. 126 and 137,

OR

are we to believe Roberts in “The Slain Lamb” page 19, “Sin in the flesh is metonymical, it is not the expression of a literal element or principle pervading physical organization, literally sin is disobedience or an act of rebellion. The impulses that lead to this reside in the flesh and therefore came to be called by the name of the act to which they gave birth. In defining first principles we must be accurate in our conception,” or again on page 85 of the “Ambassador” in March 1869 Roberts writes, “Our friend imagines there was a change in the nature of Adam when he became disobedient. There is no evidence of this whatsoever, and the presumption and evidence are entirely the other way. There was a change in Adam’s relation to his Maker, but not of his organization. What are the facts? He was formed from the dust a living soul or natural body. His mental constitution gave him moral relation to God. He was given a law to observe; the law he disobeyed, and sentence was passed that he (the disobedient soul) should return to mother earth. What was the difference between his position before disobedience and after? Simply this, that in the one case he was a living soul or natural body on probation for immortality, and in the other he was a living soul or natural body under the sentence of death. He was a living soul or natural body in both cases”?

3. Are we to believe that “It required what men call a miracle to depress to the level of the beasts that perish,” as we read in “The Visible Hand of God,” pp. 19,20,

OR

are we to believe “Eureka” vol. 1 p. 248 which says “There was no need of a miracle for the infliction of death”?

4. Are we to believe on the subject of whether Jesus was clean or unclean that “Sin could not have been condemned in the body of Jesus if it had not existed there. His body was as unclean as the bodies of those for whom he died” - “Elpis Israel” p. 128.

OR

are we to believe that “The blood of Jesus was more precious than the blood of any other man... the blood of Jesus was the only blood of all the generations of Adam, that had not been generated by the lust of the flesh... Jesus was unblemished man, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing: for he was holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners,” as the same writer says in “Eureka” vol. 1 p 278?

5. Are we to believe John Thomas in the original edition of “Elpis Israel” when he described Jesus as our “substitutionary testator”

OR

are we to believe T.R. Lister himself who asserts on the second page of his rant in paragraph 8 that “Christ was not a substitute, but a representative or federal head”?

It is crystal clear that neither John Thomas nor Robert Roberts understood the central doctrine of salvation and how men are reconciled to God.

John Thomas no doubt because of his upbringing and Calvinist background never seems to have questioned the pagan and Roman Catholic belief in “Original Sin.” In “Elpis Israel” he writes of “sinful flesh” as if it were a fact, but in “Eureka” he has understood that that term was a faulty translation and corrects it (without any apology for his previous error) to the possessive case as “Sin’s flesh” or “Flesh of Sin,” “Sin” being figurative of the devil or Satan, to whom our forefather Adam had sold himself and all in his loins.

It is only charitable to think that had John Thomas survived a few more years his high esteem for Edward Turney (which aroused the jealousy of Robert Roberts) would have resulted in the doctor, who was an honest man, although not noted for the virtue of humility, revising his views and arriving at the truth on this subject.

We were amused rather than surprised at the writers invective against the Nazarene Fellowship whom he describes as “Apostates” purveying “false and specious doctrine of the Clean Flesh Heresy (the term was invented by Robert Roberts), which is the doctrine of antichrist.” (What did Jesus mean when He said “Now ye are clean through the Word that I have spoken”?). We suffer from “the spiritual jargon of Ashdod or clerical cloven hoof”! (paragraph 11). And our beloved late brother F.J.Pearce has produced “a heretical, seditious tract subversive of the Truth and the life saving doctrine of the Atonement”!

Paragraph 9 of this rant condemns brother Pearce’s appeal to Christadelphians to “throw over the bogey of physical condemnation,” which T.R.Lister asserts is “blasphemy against the word and teaching of the prophets and apostles, and the resurrected faith set forth by Brother Thomas, yet Brother Thomas himself asserted that the change in Adam was moral and not physical! So who is deluded?

When T.R.Lister asserts in paragraph 7 that “Christ’s body was as unclean as the bodies he died for” may I remind this poor soul that this is exactly what the Scribes and Pharisees said of Jesus - “that he has an unclean spirit,” or as his fellow contributor Chris Maddocks wrote in 1998, “Jesus was a sinner who had a diabolos.” That Mark says in chapter 3 of those Scribes and Pharisees, “He that shall blaspheme against the Holy Spirit hath never forgiveness but is in danger or eternal damnation because they said “He hath an unclean spirit.”

Brother Eric Cave.

In the April, 2002 issue of the “Apocalyptic Messenger,” T.R.Lister attacks my article “Opposing Sinful Flesh” which appeared in our last Circular Letter. Here is what he has to say: -

CLEAN FLESH HERESY. In spite of our robust denunciation and rebuttal of the clean flesh heresy promulgated by the Nazarene Fellowship, we were sent yet another of these abominable publications which seek to justify their perverse Renunciationist views. In this issue (Mar/Apr) an article by Russell Gregory entitled “Opposing Sinful Flesh” makes no attempt to,

1) conceal their support for Edward Turney and the Renunciationist heresies of the 1870’s. By this confession they condemn themselves.

2) and of their opposition to Robert Roberts both in his debates with Turney, and in his publications on the Atonement such as “The Slain Lamb.” By this confession they condemn themselves as the propagators of the doctrine of antichrist (I John 4:3).

3) states that “the results of Adam’s transgression cannot be truly applied to our physical flesh” (para 1). This completely contradicts Paul’s argument in Romans 5, “that by one man’s sin, death entered the world... and so death passed on all men for all have sinned... and many were made (constituted) sinners” (vv 12,19), and in Romans 7 (“the motions of sin which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death”), i.e. the passions (a.v. margin) of the flesh are identified as sin by the apostle, and in Romans 8:3, Christ condemned “sin in the flesh.” The connotation of this verse is completely mangled, to bolster the notion that Christ had a perfectly good and undefiled nature for the purpose of God, in spite of the

fact that Paul agrees with Job “who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one... How much more abominable and filthy is man, which drinketh iniquity like water.” This further agrees with Paul (Romans 8:23): “But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity TO THE LAW OF SIN WHICH IS IN MY MEMBERS.”

4. The article states that in Paul’s argument (Romans 7) in which he says “in my flesh dwelleth no good thing,” that “this is referring to his life before conversion, before he walked in the Spirit.” (para 2). This is a gross presumption and an addition to the word which is an indictable offence (1 Peter 3:16).

5. The article seeks to identify the teaching of Bro. Thomas and Robert Roberts with the catholic doctrine of Original Sin (paras. 9-11). This is blasphemy. The Nazarene apostate heretical views rather conform to original sin, which the catholic teaching maintains is washed away by infant sprinkling. In their concoction, Adam’s legal condemnation is washed away by baptism. We do not inherit Adam’s sin. What we inherit is the consequences of Adam’s sin, a death stricken, unclean, sinful constitution which was transmitted by birth to his posterity, the human race. This is the fundamental teaching of Paul’s argument in Romans 5.

6. It is alleged that there was no change in the flesh of man (at Adam’s transgression) since sin is the transgression of the law. This is a fundamental error or pestilential heresy, the doctrine of antichrist, which was already manifest in the 1st century (2 Peter 2:1,2; 1 John 4:3; 2 John 7-10), rebutted by the teaching of the apostles and by the necessity of Christ’s sacrifice. If sin was simply the transgression of God’s law, God’s entire scheme of redemption is nullified, based on the fundamental principle that “without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins.” The whole sacrificial code, typifying Christ’s sacrifice, is rooted in the principle that “the blood is the life of the flesh.” Why did blood have to be poured out if there was nothing wrong with flesh? If the flesh was not the source of all wickedness? If flesh is clean or undefiled, why is it not possible to render perfect obedience? Yet the word condemns all flesh as under sin and having fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3:19,20,23). Only if the Lord, who rendered perfect obedience to His Father in Heaven, even unto death (Philippians 2:8), only if He was possessed of an unclean, sin stricken diabolos nature (Hebrews 2:14), does God become righteous in demanding the slaying of His Son on Moriah. This is marked by the rending of the Veil in the Temple from top to bottom, thus dramatising the rending of the veil of His flesh (Hebrews 10:20), opening the way into the Most Holy, for we who were one time afar off, and aliens from the commonwealth of Israel (Ephesians 2:12-16). What is the point of this if it does not signify the conquest of human nature on the cross, the rending of sin’s flesh? The great barrier to entrance into atonement and reconciliation and restoration to fellowship with God is the flesh with all its unclean issues, physical, mental and moral. The process of development of a son of God is a path of purification, first mental (enlightenment), then moral (the godly way of life) and finally physical when this mortal is swallowed up in immortality and this corruptible puts on incorruptibility. This corrupt constitution, this vile body, the body of this death, changed in a twinkling of an eye to a glorious, deathless, undefiled and powerful divine elohistic nature which the first Adam forfeited through disobedience.

Many other false propositions and erroneous arguments fill the Nazarene publication adding sin upon sin, heresy upon heresy, slander upon slander. Space does not permit to go further in rebutting this spiritual jargon of Ashdod. We can only appeal to the editors and their following to abandon their apostate blasphemous confusion.”

T.R.Lister.

* * *

We thank Mr T.R.Lister for pointing out what he considers to be our false propositions, erroneous arguments, perverse views which propagate the doctrines of antichrist, our gross presumptions, mangled verses which contradict Paul, our blasphemy in finding fault with Dr Thomas and R.Roberts, our concoctions, our pestilential heresies, our indictable offences, our sins and slanders in our abominable publications!

And yes, I did make a mistake in my article “Opposing Sinful Flesh” and I am most grateful to the person who pointed it out to me, for it was a careless mistake on my part when I wrote on page 7, in the penultimate paragraph, “Worse still these deduced arguments misuse Scriptures to the extent that

Christadelphians boast to be unique amongst Christian groups in worshipping an unclean and defiled Christ!"

The mistake lies in the last six words of that statement, for Christadelphians do not worship an unclean and defiled Christ; they say His supposed defilement or uncleanness was removed when He ascended into heaven after His resurrection. What I ought to have said was that Christadelphians believed Jesus Christ had defiled or unclean flesh while on earth; even at His resurrection His flesh was supposed to have still been unclean, hence the reason, they say, He said to Mary, "Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended unto my Father..." or as Dr Thomas would have it – "unto my Father's nature!"

I hope what follows will show there is a more reasonable understanding of the Scriptures under discussion than that put forward by Mr Lister, and while we could hope that Mr Lister will agree to our understanding it cannot be assumed that he will, but neither should any one ever feel intimidated by irresponsible and despotic Christadelphians who believe they should be heard for their much shouting. It is not these bullyboys we should be listening to but the still small voice of God (1 Kings 19:12). So let us look at some of the claims of Mr Lister in the light of Scripture and in the study which follows it will be seen that three commonly misused or misunderstood Greek words have been given their proper scriptural meaning simply by giving the context in which they are used in other places.

However, first of all I want to point to two facts:

a) Mr Lister writes in his first section that we make no attempt to conceal our opposition to Robert Roberts and by this we condemn ourselves as propagators of the doctrine of antichrist! While in some respects we are indeed anti Roberts, but being anti Roberts does not make us anti Christ! We are, for example, anti Roberts for his lecture "The Slain Lamb" in response to Edward Turney's lecture "The Sacrifice Of Christ," for R.Roberts lecture is nothing more than a shameful catalogue of misrepresentation giving no answers to Edward Turney's arguments or understanding, as all who study both Edward Turney's lecture and Robert Roberts reply can see for themselves. Robert Roberts simply did not know what he was talking about.

b) Secondly, Mr Lister refers to "Robert Roberts in his debates with Turney." What debates? There were no such debates. Edward Turney asked on several occasions to meet Robert Roberts in debate and in public Roberts said he would but when it came to making arrangements Robert Roberts always found excuses to refuse. No debate between these two people ever took place. Robert Roberts made sure of that.

Now to T.R.Lister's claims. In section 3 Mr. Lister writes in reference to Romans 5:19: "and many were made (constituted) sinners..."

In response to this we start by quoting a comment made by Tony Benson and reported in our C.L. 184, p 15:

"Romans 5:19 "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one man shall many be made righteous." The question here is, What is the significance of the word 'made'?"

The Greek word translated 'made' here is not one of the common words for 'made.' People are not literally made sinners by Adam's disobedience, nor are they literally made righteous by Christ's obedience. Those in Christ will ultimately become truly righteous beings, but this is not what the verse is talking about."

So far so good, but then Tony Benson loses track of Paul's discourse and assumes that the Greek word *kathistemi* "seems to indicate that men and women are set down in a constitution or order of things in which sin is inevitable."

Let us consider Brother Eric Cave's reply (C.L. 184 p 20):-

"Romans 5:19. This passage raises the obvious question in relation to Christadelphian teaching that God implanted a 'bias to sin' within the flesh of mankind subsequent to

Adam's sin to make us all sinners. So why does not the obedience of one make us all righteous? You query the significance of the word 'made' and claim that *kathistemi* literally means 'to place, or set down permanently' and that what the word seems to indicate is that men and women are set down in a constitution or order of things in which sin is inevitable, which cannot be true otherwise Christ could never have been sinless. Nor is it true that this occurs because mankind has a weak sin-prone nature inherited from Adam, and has to grow up in an environment inherently sinful. Scripture says, "Reject the devil and he will flee from you." Vine says that the word 'made' is used in the same way as in Acts 2:36 to mean "appoint."

When Adam sinned he yielded himself servant (bond-slave) to Sin. He appointed himself and all his subsequent progeny to that condition, a legal technical situation in which his only wages were 'death' and from which there was no escape unless a near kinsman purchased his freedom by suffering that same judicially inflicted death. The divine plan involved God concluding "all under sin that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to THEM THAT BELIEVE." (Galatians 3:22). John tells us that Jesus is "the propitiation for our sins and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."

For those who wish to go a little deeper into the meaning of the Greek word *kathistemi* we list the following from Strong's Concordance. All we ask is that one keeps in mind whether the word *kathistemi* is used in connection with our physical flesh or with the position one holds:

Matthew 24:45,47 "Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his Lord will make (*kathistemi*) ruler over his household... make (*kathistemi*) him ruler over all his goods"

Matthew 25:21,23 "I will make (*kathistemi*) thee ruler over many things... I will make (*kathistemi*) thee ruler over many things"

Luke 12:14,42,44 "Man, who made (*kathistemi*) thee a judge or a divider over you?.. his lord shall make (*kathistemi*) him ruler over his household... he will make (*kathistemi*) him ruler over his household"

Acts 6:3 "Wherefore brethren, look ye out among you seven men... whom we may appoint (*kathistemi*) over this business."

Acts 7:10,27,35 "and made (*kathistemi*) him governor over Egypt... Who made (*kathistemi*) thee a ruler and a judge over us? saying, who made (*kathistemi*) thee a ruler and a judge"

Acts 17:15 "And they that conducted (*kathistemi*) Paul brought him unto Athens;"

Romans 5:19, "For as by one man's disobedience many were made (*kathistemi*) sinners, so by the obedience of one many were made (*kathistemi*) righteous"

Titus 1:5, "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou... ordain (*kathistemi*) elders in every city, as I had appointed thee."

Hebrews 2:7, "Thou... did set (*kathistemi*) him over the works of thy hand."

Hebrews 5:1, "For every high priest taken from among men is ordained (*kathistemi*) for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins."

Hebrews 7:28 "For the law maketh (*kathistemi*) men high priests..."

Hebrews 8:3, "For every high priest is ordained (*kathistemi*) to offer gifts..."

2 Peter 1:8 "For if these things be in you and abound, they make (*kathistemi*) you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."

It is surely obvious that the meaning of *kathistemi* is 'to appoint a person to a position' and nowhere does it indicate a physical condition of the flesh and therefore can never be used to support the false notion of sin dwelling in the flesh.

We go next to section 5 where T.R.Lister says: "We do not inherit Adam's sin. What we inherit is the consequences of Adam's sin..." To say that the fundamental teaching of Romans 5 is that we inherit a death stricken, unclean, sinful constitution, transmitted by birth is about as far from the truth as one can get.

Romans chapter 5 deals with "being justified by faith," "access by faith into this grace," "rejoice in hope of the glory of God," and the "love of God shed abroad in our hearts." And how did this come about? "For when we were yet without strength... Christ died for the ungodly... reconciled to God and saved by his life." And why were we considered ungodly? "Wherefore as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men in whom all sinned." (I am here using the marginal reference).

As we have seen this is further explained in Galatians 3:22 - "But the scripture hath concluded all under sin that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe." This is the reason why all are concluded under the one sin of Adam - to provide a blessing for the faithful - and there is nothing to suggest a death stricken, unclean, sinful constitution transmitted by birth.

Note verses 13 to 17 are in parenthesis and further explain the love, mercy and abundance of grace, and the free gift of God through Jesus Christ. Then verse 18 reads, "by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation" again refers to all being concluded under the sin of Adam for the purpose of the blessings that can come through Jesus Christ and introduces us to the federal principle of being under either the federal head of Adam or under the federal head of Jesus Christ.

Going back now to section 3 T.R.Lister says with regard to Romans 7:5: "the passions (a.v. margin) of the flesh are identified as sin by the apostle." This is curious language and is used of necessity because Mr Lister wants his readers to believe more than he states. The Emphatic Diaglott reads, "For when we were in the flesh, those sinful passions, which were through the law, worked in our members to bring forth fruit to death." All T.R.Lister is saying then, is that our sinful passions are sinful, which hardly needs stating, so I rather think he is trying to tell us that all passions are sinful, which is not true. Many of us have a passion for truth. Has he never understood the words of Jesus at the Last Supper? Literally, "With lust I have lusted to eat this Passover with you"?

In any case in the next verse Paul writes, "But now, having died (in baptism), we are released from the law, by which we were held; so that we may serve in newness of Spirit, and not in oldness of letter." Accordingly we are no longer under the law of sin and death but have been made free from it, as we are no longer living in the flesh but in the Spirit. But this is not compatible with Christadelphian doctrine which claims we cannot be free from the law of sin and death until our change comes at the return of Jesus Christ. How then can a Christadelphian "serve in newness of Spirit" in this present time? For them, on their own reasoning, it is impossible.

To add further to this reference to Romans 7, I quote again from Brother Eric Cave in his reply to a Christadelphian (CL. 192, p 6) -

"Next Romans 7 and what you term 'Nazarene theology.' It is true that in all English Bibles there is a change of tense in the middle of verse 14 which continues to the end of the chapter. But this arose because all Christendom, including King James translators and the Christadelphian 'establishment' remain believers in "Original Sin." Whereas the verb tense in English is completely 'time orientated' (unlike Hebrew and Greek). In English the verb tense clearly confirms all action as either past, present or future. This does not apply in Greek where except for the future tense the tense is not concerned with 'time' but with the nature and state of the action as any Greek grammar will confirm. The context normally decides whether a translator renders the passage as past, present or future.

Ask yourself the question, Could the man who writes in Romans 7:5, “For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sin, which were *by the law*, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.” Could such a man follow that glorious contention with the statement that “I am carnal sold under sin”? Could such a man have exhorted the Corinthians “Be ye followers of me, as I am of Christ”? Impossible!

The whole of chapter 7 from verse 14 should have been in the past tense when translated, and I believe would have been had Christendom not been deceived by “Original Sin” or “Sin in the flesh” as Christadelphians term it. Why does the very next verse (chapter 8) declare “There is therefore NOW no condemnation (Greek *katakrima* = down Judgment) to them which are in Christ Jesus who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit”? Was Paul “in the Spirit”? of course he was, he was “in Christ” from the moment of that baptism following his experience on the Damascus road.”

Paul tells us that we are discharged from the law, dead to that which held us captive therefore making us free, as Jesus said “If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.” (John 8:36). When we were in the flesh we were captives of the law but we are no longer in the flesh but in the spirit and therefore free, and then Paul repeats this same thought in different words by saying that for those who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit there is now no condemnation.

In his next paragraph, T.R.Lister writes: “Paul agrees with Job ‘who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one...’” Of course Paul agrees with Job but neither of them are talking about unclean or defiled physical flesh. So what is Job saying here?

For our answer it seems appropriate that we once again quote Brother Eric Cave, this time in response to an article by Chris Maddocks on the subject of Job’s words in relation to Paul’s teaching (C.L. 179 p 28):

“The same false premise expresses itself in the silly conclusion that children are unclean because they have “the law of sin and death within them,” but fails to explain why Paul could assert in I Corinthians 7:14 “The unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now they are holy,” or even why Peter should say in Acts 10:28, “God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean.” Nor does his quotation from Job help his false doctrine for when Job says “Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one” the Hebrew word so rendered only refers to those ceremonial and temporary conditions occasioned by issues or contact with unclean animals or food, etc.”

For the sake of completeness we mention two more quotes from the book of Job which have in the past been used to support Christadelphian doctrine, but they cannot be reliably used because they were spoken by two friends of Job, Eliphaz and Bildad, of whom we read in Job 42:7, “The Lord said unto Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends, for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath.”

Job 15:14,15 Eliphaz said, “What is man, that he should be clean? and he which is born of a woman, that he should be righteous? Behold he putteth no trust in his saints; yea, the heavens are not clean in his sight.”

Job 25:4 Bildad said, “How can man be justified with God? or how can he be clean that is born of a woman? Behold even to the moon, and it shineth not; yea, the stars are not pure in his sight. How much less man, that is a worm, and the son of man, which is a worm?”

We feel there is no doubt that both Eliphaz and Bildad were sincere people but God did not approve of all they said and we cannot treat what they said as inspired Scripture. God required that they should go to Job as their priest in order to make an acceptable burnt offering “lest I deal with you after your folly.” (Job 42:7,8).

We conclude that section 4 shows lack of understanding on the part of Mr Lister. 1 Peter 3:16 reads: "Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evil doers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ." In our good conscience we have sound reason to stand by our understanding of Romans chapter 7.

Next we go to section 6. Regarding the doctrine of antichrist, T.R.Lister refers to 2 Peter 1:2; 1 John 4:3; and 2 John 7-10, and to which we add 1 John 2:18,22.

Greek - *anti* = 'in the room of,' and *christos* = 'Messiah.' In theology there are several ideas as to what this *antichristos* refers. Some say it is a false teaching which denied the incarnation of Jesus, while in the second century, Gnosticism came into fashion and the followers of which believed that the body (flesh) was evil. This belief to some extent took over both Christianity and pagan ideas and claimed a way of salvation known only to its initiates. Again, there was an early form of Docetism which taught that Jesus only seemed to come in human form, denying that He really became a man. Others link antichristos with "the man of sin" which Paul refers to in 2 Thessalonians 2:3,4 and believe that as things get worse and worse in the last days there will arise an Antichrist who is not Satan but has the backing of Satan, when he will make his greatest challenge to good and to the things of God prior to Christ's second coming. (Gleaned from "The New Bible Dictionary").

It is rather stretching the imagination to suppose the Nazarene Fellowship understanding of the Atonement, which after all, stems from Dr Thomas's own belief at one time, is the doctrine of the Antichrist!

However, the teaching of Peter's and John's epistles is rather that of exhortation to remain faithful. For example, 1 John 5:13, "These things I have written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God. And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us..." John calls upon his readers to judge the things they hear and test whether they are the truth – true knowledge of God, exhortations to righteousness, love and faith in Jesus Christ and fellowship with God. God is light and God is love and He is the warmth in our hearts. We should live to the highest moral standard in which John addresses his readers as little children, beloved, and with the tender concern of a father. What better can we ask "according to his will" than for knowledge of the Scriptures, and from them, an understanding of the will and purpose of God and for wisdom to follow in the paths of righteousness?

Now let us take each reference in turn:

2 Peter 2:1,2. "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of..."

Yes, there were false prophets in Israel and Peter prophecies that there will be again in the future, i.e. in what we now know as the Christian Era. This is not at all surprising as human nature hasn't changed but always wants to alter God's commands to suit his own selfishness and excuse his faults. There have been and still are many antichrists. What of the Roman Catholic church? Here are false teachers, heresies, blasphemies etc. What of the Muslim beliefs? Here is a great false prophet supplanting Jesus Christ as Lord.

But there is another point - "the Lord that bought them." This demands substitution. The price paid, which was the precious blood of Christ in exchange for that which is purchased, His disciples. It was a life for a life; the life of Christ for the life of Adam and consequently our life which came from Adam. Christadelphian doctrine, by denying substitution, denies purchase.

1 John 4:3. "And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God; and this is the spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now is it in the world"

We of the Nazarene Fellowship believe Jesus came in literal flesh, the same sort of flesh as everyone else, yet some would twist John's words to apply them to us and state that what John means is that Jesus came in unclean flesh which, of course, we deny, and they then say we must mean that Jesus didn't really

come in the flesh! Well, there were some in John's day who denied that Jesus had come in the flesh so why try to apply John's words to us who say He did?

2 John 7-10. "For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. Look to your selves that ye lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward. Whosoever transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed:"

"Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God." Who is it that says we cannot help but transgress, "if flesh is clean or undefiled, why is it not possible to render perfect obedience"? Need we say more?

1 John 2:18,22, "Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists whereby we know that it is the last time... Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son."

Mr Lister did not make reference to this passage because it did not suit his story. The one thing he felt he couldn't pin on us is to say we deny that Jesus is the Christ or that we deny the Father and the Son.

In the next paragraph T.R.Lister writes, "The word condemns all flesh as under sin." There is some truth in this but what is the condemnation? This condemnation is not altogether a bad thing for it is that we are all concluded under sin as we have seen from Galatians 3:22, for the purpose of the blessings we can receive through Jesus Christ. It is that we have been sold under sin prior to being bought with a price. This buying and selling is a matter of law. Sold unto sin for the breaking of the law of God and bought back by the love and mercy of God and the love and determined courage of His Son in giving His life for the joy of bringing many sons to glory. However, to say that "the Word condemns all flesh as sin" is not true for all who come out from Adam and are baptised into Christ are not under condemnation. Romans 8:1, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

As we said above, buying is exchanging one thing for another. We are purchased with the precious blood of Jesus Christ. The life is in the blood and it was the natural *psuche* life in His blood which Jesus laid down to purchase natural *psuche* life for us. Jesus lost His natural *psuche* life on the Cross but rose with eternal *zoe* life. The temple veil was rent to show that the way of salvation had been opened through the voluntary sacrifice of the Son of God, through whose shed blood all can be forgiven thus fulfilling the Law of Moses and dispensing with further sacrifice for sin.

In his penultimate paragraph T.R.Lister writes of, "This corrupt constitution, this vile body." Here he again insists on the corruption of the flesh by calling our flesh a vile body which is nowhere taught in Scripture. Having dealt with "constitution" earlier and shown how it is better understood in Romans 5:19 as meaning "appointed," we now look at the word "vile" which Mr Lister refers to in Philippians 3:21. The Greek word is *tapeinosis* and means 'low estate' or 'humility.'

Let us look at some other places where this word is found:

Matthew 11:29. "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly (*tapeinos*) in heart:" Did Jesus have a vile heart? Of course not.

Luke 1:48 & 52. "For he hath regarded the low estate (*tapeinosis*) of his handmaiden... He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree (*tapeinosis*)." We suggest that in each of these cases the word humble is appropriate.

Luke 3:5. "Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low (*tapeinoo*)." Vile is not the meaning here.

Acts 8:33. "In his humiliation (*tapeinophrosune* = lowliness of mind) his judgment was taken away." Young's concordance gives the meaning.

Romans 12:16. “Mind not high things but condescend to men of low estate (*tapeinosis*).” Condescend to vile men?

Ephesians 4:2. “With all lowliness (*tapeinophrosune*) and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another.” “Blessed are the meek”

Philippians 2:3. “Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind (*tapeinophrosune*) let each esteem other better than themselves.”

Philippians 3:21. “Who shall change our vile (*tapeinosis*) body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body.” “I am fearfully and wonderfully made” - David.

James 1:9 & 10. “Let the brother of low degree (*tapeinos*) rejoice in that he is exalted - but the rich in that he is made low (*tapeinosis*).” Should a vile brother rejoice?

None of these teach vile flesh or a corrupt constitution. Except for Luke 3:48 & 52, Jesus typifies its meaning in Matthew 11:29 where He said “I am meek and lowly in heart.” He was not vile of heart and He was not vile of flesh’

We would emphasize that “vile” in Philippians 3:21 must not to be confused with Paul’s reference to “vile” in Romans 1:26: “For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections...” This Greek word is totally different. The Greek word for “vile” in this case is *atimia*, and the context in which it is used gives sufficient meaning. While the Scriptures give us a perspective on human beings which for the most part is far from flattering, God condemns their sinful behaviour but never their flesh.

In section 8 we come to the most heart-breaking sentence regarding the work of God in Christ which we have come across in a long time and surely ranks with A.D.Norris’s nefarious “There hung the devil dead” which appeared in the first edition of “Understanding The Bible” but was removed from later editions as a matter of expediency and without any change of teaching. Here, T.R.Lister claims:

“Only if the Lord, who rendered perfect obedience to His Father in Heaven, even unto death, only if He was possessed of an unclean, sin-stricken diabolos nature, does God become righteous in demanding the slaying of His Son on Moriah.”

It is hard indeed to find words which best describe ones sickness of feeling on reading such a horrible and misguided statement. Sometime ago I was prompted to write a short article entitled “Who Killed Jesus Christ” after reading a “Wayside Pulpit” outside a Pentecostal Church in Birmingham U.K. which read “God so loved the world that He murdered His own Son for us.” On that occasion I linked this claim with Clause 12 of the BASF which also contends that God killed His own Son using the Jews and Romans as His instruments and in that article I proved conclusively that Jesus Himself denied such a possibility. God is love and Jesus Christ manifested God during His life on earth. “He who hath seen me hath seen the Father.” (John 14:9). Where can we see such a cruel God manifested in Jesus Christ? There is no reason on earth or in heaven why we should believe Jesus possessed an unclean, sin-stricken diabolos nature or that God demanded His slaying. It is a total denial of the gospel message.

It is sad to have to write as we do in criticism of the doctrines of others but it is a great joy to put forward the reason for the hope that is within us and if what we have shown has little or no effect on such authors as T.R.Lister we pray that by the grace of God some will be moved to see the truth of the Bible record and shun the distasteful Christadelphian doctrines.

Russell Gregory